

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission

Warner Elementary School

Meeting Minutes – March 14, 2016

Chairman Dr. Tony Allen called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Dr. Allen asked the members of the public to introduce themselves, followed by introductions from each of the Commission members.

Dr. Allen said that there was a modification to the agenda. Action Item 4, Action on Alternative Language for Redistricting Resolution, should be dispelled. He explained that the alternative language was found in the resolutions referred to in Action Item 3, so it was redundant and the Commission would be voting on only one item.

The Commission voted to approve the agenda.

Dr. Allen stated that he hopes that this is the last conversation the Commission has about redistricting for a while. He also reminded the members of the Commission that their work is not complete even if the State Board of Education does not approve the redistricting plan. The committees will continue their work until the Commission sunsets in 2021. Chairman Allen expects all committees, but especially the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty, Charter-District Collaboration, and Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committees, to be very active over the next 4.5 years. He charged the Commission with carrying that message back to their communities.

Dr. Allen reminded the Commission of the path forward if the State Board of Education approves the Commission's redistricting plan, which he stated would be likely if the Commission affirms the alternative language. The next step would be approval in the General Assembly, followed by the Governor's signature.

Kenny Rivera, Vice-Chair, briefly described how the alternative language was developed. He stated that the Commission leadership still firmly believes that the redistricting plan if enacted would have positive outcomes. He stated that he thinks that the revised language clarifies the decision making process if the funding is not provided and strengthens the commitments between districts and the Commission.

Kenny Rivera outlined the six sections in the revised language and explained the reasoning behind each section's inclusion.

Dr. Allen made a point to mention that the resolution is not for consideration of the State Board of Education, which is made clear in the first section.

Kenny Rivera read through the entire revised resolution.

Dr. Allen opened discussion.

Ralph Ackerman asked what the original intention of including the State Board of Education in the process of determining whether or not there is sufficient funding to continue moving forward.

Representative Charles Potter, Jr. responded that it was because they are the State Board of Education and they have jurisdiction over items related to education throughout the state.

Ted Laws asked if it would benefit the Commission to explicitly include the number of members on the Commission and how many members constitute a 2/3 majority. He also mentioned that the public is fed up with taxes, and that the Commission should ensure that there are enough checks and balances. He warned that future referendums may not pass as a result of the Commission's redistricting plan.

Aretha Miller asked for clarification on point 3. She asked if either Christina School District or Red Clay Consolidated School District can suspend the timeline without agreement from the other district. The response was that either district could elect to suspend the timeline.

Aretha Miller asked for an explanation on when exactly the funding for each phase would be provided.

Dr. Rich highlighted the exact sentences that had been changed in the resolution, clarifying funding and removing the State Board of Education. He said that at the end of each stage there will be a review of resources to determine if the proper amounts have been allotted.

Aretha Miller asked a follow-up question relating to when the conversation regarding proper funding would begin.

Dr. Rich said that it will begin on July 1, at the end of the legislative session, since at that point it will be clear whether or not the General Assembly has provided the necessary resources.

Ralph Ackerman expressed concern that having the phase begin on July 1 does not allow time for the decision making process regarding adequate funding to occur as it is likely the state budget will not be passed until June 30.

Dr. Rich said that the decision making process falls to the Commission following the conclusion of the legislative session.

Ralph Ackerman suggested that there should be a specific time stated where the Commission must make a decision by, for example a 30-day period.

Dr. Rich warned against setting a specific deadline and reminded the Commission that Governor Markell did not sign SB 122 or HB 148 until August 4, 2015.

Dr. Allen stated that since the trigger comes from the district, the Commission leadership wanted to give them as much time as they need.

Representative Charles Potter, Jr. agreed that given the Governor might not sign the bills right away, a timeline based on a set date might not be the best solution, but a timeline based on the Governor's signature could be a compromise.

Dr. Eve Buckley asked if there was thought to adding language that districts must "reasonably demonstrate" that there is not the funding available in paragraph 3 under "Be it resolved."

Dr. Allen stated that there was language in the compendium that requires districts to demonstrate that the funds were not provided.

Kenny Rivera said that the exact dollar amounts are listed in the compendium, which acts almost as a checklist for the districts.

Dr. Allen explained that by allowing the districts to determine whether or not the funding was provided allowed for the opposite scenario where the districts could agree to move forward even if the all of the funding listed in the compendium was not there in a given year.

Dr. Eve Buckley asked if the word “determine” implies that the districts would also have to demonstrate the lack of funding.

Dr. Allen and Dr. Rich both confirmed that that was the intention.

Representative Charles Potter, Jr. stated that he was glad that the Governor and other bodies were able to come together to reach this agreement.

Margie Lopez-Waite asked how realistic it would be for districts to put a halt on their plans if the funding does not come through. For example, capital improvements and construction of new buildings would likely take several years of funding. She asked if the state gets a refund if the districts begin to make progress, but at the very end they pull out.

Merv Daughterty answered that this would not be possible.

Kenny Rivera said that the districts are looking at the end product.

Dr. Rich said that the Commission is not speculating what will be done in each stage. It is very clearly laid out in the plan what will be accomplished in each year, and the funding is connected to each year.

Margie Lopez Waite expressed concern that Red Clay Consolidated School District could afford to execute the plan.

Dr. Rich explained that the core funding is for English language learners, low-income students, and basic special education in grades K-3. There are no funding allotted for capital projects in the plan.

Vicki Seifred stated that there really is no way of anticipating what capital projects may need to be done, without knowing how attendance patterns will change. Students may come back into the traditional district schools as a result of the positive changes that the plan will create.

Representative Charles Potter, Jr. made a motion to approve the revised resolution.

Ted Laws asked if the Commission was going to vote on the proposed amendments from the Commission members.

Reverend Meredith Griffin asked if clarification was needed on what two-thirds of 23 is.

Representative Charles Potter, Jr. made a motion to amend the resolution to include the exact number of members on the Commission.

A roll call vote was held on the revised resolution. The motion passed with 20 yes, 1 no, and 2 absent votes.

Dr. Allen opened the floor to public comment, having no members of the public interested in making a public comment, the meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Attendance: March 14, 2016
Warner Elementary School

Commissioners

Ralph Ackerman
Tony Allen
Eve Buckley
Karen Eller
Meredith Griffin
Fredericka Jenner
Joseph Laws
Elizabeth Lockman

Margie Lopez Waite
Johnny Means
Aretha Miller
Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Joe Pika
Representative Charles Potter, Jr.
Kenny Rivera
Vicki Seifred

Members of the Public

Vicki Gehrt
Merv Daugherty
Laura Nash
Bob Silber
Megan Pauly
Equetta Jones
Taurean Taylor
Mike Matthews
David Davis
Michael Bank
Lee Davis

Mike Kepski
Mike R.
Matt Albright
Sara Spancan
Avi Wolfman-Arent
Adriana Bohm
Ty Jones
Meghan Wallace
Chandlee Kuhn
Rep. Stephanie Bolden

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Anne Gould
Chester Holland
Dan Rich

Nicole Rodriguez
Kelly Sherretz
Kervin Zamora